**Black Bears of Massachusetts**

*Bears are fascinating creatures, but they can also be potentially dangerous. Bears and people can exist together if people use common sense when dealing with these animals.*



The black bear is a shaggy-haired, large-bodied animal. In Massachusetts, male bears average 230 pounds and females 140 pounds. These bears are usually black with a brown muzzle, and some have a white patch on the chest. They have small eyes, rounded ears, and a short tail. Even with small eyes, bears have good eyesight, and their hearing is good as well. However, they use their exceptional sense of smell to locate food and recognize possible dangers.

Bears are common in western Massachusetts, somewhat common in the central part of the state, and rare in the eastern counties. However, single bears, especially young males, have been found in the eastern region. Bears are not social animals and rarely roam together. They usually live in wooded wetlands, swamps, and hardwood forests near water sources. Bears are typically active in the daytime during the spring and fall. In the summer they tend to be more active at dawn and dusk. Bears who have had a great deal of contact with humans will wander at night, as will males in breeding season.

Contrary to popular belief, black bears are not fierce. Their first instinct is to flee when danger is near. Problems occur when the bears get used to humans and human food sources. They become bolder and can cause damage. People then become fearful of bears and sometimes destroy them. The truth is that black bears rarely harm people. However, minor attacks can take place when people tease bears or closely approach them in parks or campgrounds. Female bears protect their cubs by placing them up in trees. The females may rush at people who get too close to the cubs, but they will almost never attack. Still, the bear is a wild animal and can be potentially dangerous. For this reason, it is good to know something about bear behavior.

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| Black Bear Behavior | |
| Behavior | What it Means |
| Standing on hind legs | The bear wants more information through smell and sight. |
| Woof (one sharp exhale) | The bear is startled. A surprised bear can be dangerous. |
| Growling, snarling, roaring | The bear is upset and could be dangerous. |
| Charging | The bear wants to warn another animal. Most charges are bluffs. If so, the bear will stop before making contact. However, it is a hostile act. |

**Bear Safety Tips**

**Protect Yourself at Home**

*When bears get used to humans and depend on human food, they are likely to cause problems.*

• Never feed a bear.

• Do not tempt bears by putting food within easy reach.

• Do not leave pet food or dirty dishes outside at night.

• Store all garbage in closed containers in a garage or other inside location.

• Do not leave your garbage cans outside overnight. Put them by the roadside just before pickup.

**Protect Yourself When Camping**

*You can enjoy a night in the wilderness without attracting bears to your camp.*

• Do not cook, eat, or store food in your tent. Avoid cooking next to your tent where odors may stay around.

• Do not get rid of food in your campfire. The odor might attract bears. Store food in bear-proof containers or lock it in the trunk of your vehicle.

• Clean all dishes and put garbage in closed containers.

• Use a flashlight at night to warn bears away.

**Protect Yourself When You See a Bear**

*In any close sighting of a bear, keep calm and review the situation.*

• Leave the area if you see a bear in the distance. Bears will usually flee from people and move away silently.

• Do not get between a female bear and her cubs.

• Do not throw food items to trick bears that approach you. This teaches bears how to get people to give them food.

• Do not run if a bear charges. Stand your ground and then back away slowly.

1. Under which heading would you most likely find information on why you should not run if you encounter a bear?
2. Black Bear Behavior
3. Protect Yourself at Home
4. Protect Yourself When Camping
5. Protect Yourself When You See a Bear
6. According to the chart “Black Bear Behavior”*,* a bear stands on his hind legs because he is
7. trying warn another animal nearby.
8. angry and can be dangerous to humans.
9. gathering information through his sense smell.
10. frightened and is going to turn around and run away.
11. In “Black Bears of Massachusetts,” the author includes the italicized introduction to
12. indicate that bears and humans can exist together.
13. urge readers to avoid living in areas where bears live.
14. explain the locations of where you can encounter bears.
15. provide information on how to protect yourself from bears.
16. The author includes the photograph at the beginning of the article to
17. caution campers from feeding bears.
18. compare a black bear with other bears.
19. provide an example of an average sized bear.
20. suggest that humans should be friendly with a bear.
21. The section “Bear Safety Tips” is important to the article because it
22. provides locations people should avoid when traveling in Massachusetts.
23. lists easy advice people should follow to protect themselves from bears.
24. encourages people to learn more about strange bear behaviors.
25. identifies ways people can protect bears from being destroyed.
26. Which sentence from the article tells the author’s main message?
27. Bears are not social animals and rarely roam together.
28. Bears are typically active in the daytime during the spring and fall.
29. Bears are fascinating creatures, but they can also be potentially dangerous.
30. Bears who have had a great deal of contact with humans will wander at night, as well males in breeding season.
31. Which pair of words from the article is most OPPOSITE in meaning?
32. wander, roam
33. tease, damage
34. approach, rush
35. protect, destroy
36. With which statement would the author most likely agree?
37. Bears can be dangerous when people do not understand bear behaviors.
38. People should feed bears in order to get bears to be friendly towards them.
39. The black bear is the most dangerous type of bear in western Massachusetts.
40. Bears need more contact with humans to make them less dangerous to people.
41. By reading the article and “Bear Safety Tips,” the reader can conclude that bears
42. are attracted to food.
43. are only active at night.
44. will attack if a person stands still.
45. will be found in western Massachusetts.
46. What causes female bears to run towards people?
47. They want to attack the people.
48. They are protecting their cubs.
49. They are looking for food.
50. They are playing.

Answer Key

1. Correct Answer D, DOK 2
2. Correct Answer C, DOK 2
3. Correct Answer A, DOK 3
4. Correct Answer C, DOK 2
5. Correct Answer B, DOK 2
6. Correct Answer C, DOK 3
7. Correct Answer D, DOK 2
8. Correct Answer A, DOK 3
9. Correct Answer A, DOK 2
10. Correct Answer B, DOK 1